

LASER Program

Statutory and/or Budget Language

\$500,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2024 and \$500,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2025 are provided solely for the Washington state leadership and assistance for science education reform (LASER) regional partnership activities, including instructional material purchases, teacher and principal professional development, and school and community engagement events. The office may require the recipient of these funds to report the impacts of the recipient's efforts in alignment with the measures of the Washington school improvement framework.

Purpose

This proviso supports a statewide network of regional science education leaders to provide leadership, resources, and technical assistance to schools, districts, and teachers for science teaching and learning.

Description of Services Provided

In the 2023-2024 year, the LASER program supported ten regional alliances to implement local leadership and support focused on the following: providing professional development, engaging administrators in instructional leadership for equitable implementation of Washington State Science Learning Standards, and strengthening K–12 Science/STEM pathways by supporting enabling conditions in schools and districts. The program also provided four LASER Alliance meetings for learning and collaboration, a LASER Alliance Network convening, and two statewide professional learning events on content integration open to all educators.

Criteria for Receiving Services and/or Grants

Grant funding is only provided to the ten LASER Alliance Directors for the work in their region. All districts in each region are eligible for LASER support as their interest and capacity allows.

Beneficiaries in the 2023–24 School Year

Number of School Districts	165
Number of Schools	351
Number of Students	54,668
Number of Educators	991
Other (administrators)	220

Are Federal or Other Funds Contingent on State Funding?

No



State Funding History

Fiscal Year	Amount Funded	Actual Expenditures
2024	\$500,000	\$492,825
2023	\$500,000	\$500,000
2022	\$500,000	\$500,000
2021	\$500,000	\$500,000
2020	\$356,000	\$354,167

Number of Beneficiaries Per Fiscal Year (School Districts)

Fiscal Year	Number of Schools
2024	165
2023	165
2022	173
2021	306
2020	410

Programmatic Changes Since Inception (If Any)

Washington STEM served as the leadership and fiscal agent for LASER until July of 2023, then ESD 101 temporarily served in this role for the 2023–2024 year only. Moving forward, OSPI will provide the regional LASER grants management and LASER will utilize a more distributed leadership model consisting of OSPI Associate Science Directors, Regional Science Coordinators who are LASER Alliance Directors, Institute for Systems Biology, and representation from the LASER Advisory Board.

Program Evaluation or Evaluation of Major Findings

All ten regions were able to implement their planned regional work plans effectively and utilize their funding to meet their stated goals. Regions moved towards a more coherent statewide movement for reform this year by aligning work plans with one or more of three overarching goals of providing professional development, engaging administrators in instructional leadership, and/or strengthening K–12 Science/STEM pathways by supporting enabling system conditions. Statewide professional learning events were well-attended, which illustrates the interest and need for more support and resources on content integration for the elementary grades.

Major Challenges Faced by the Program

The unexpected change of the managing body from WA STEM to ESD 101 created a lag in proviso implementation while a new contract was developed, which shortened the time this year for regions to enact their workplans.

All districts are eligible for LASER support; however, provision of support is highly constrained by the amount of funding available.

Future Opportunities

For the 2024-2025 year, the LASER program will take a greater focus on supporting leadership actions, supporting professional learning and implementation around high-quality instructional materials, and intentional listening sessions with districts to determine their specific needs.

With district eliminations of science leadership staff commonly seen across the state this year due to budget constraints, LASER is needed to fill these newly created gaps in support. All districts are eligible for LASER support, but that support is constrained by the current funding. Increased funding would allow for increased support to more districts, schools, and teachers.

Other Relevant Information

[Washington LASER website](#)

School Districts Receiving Assistance

[Click here to see a list of all OSPI grant recipients in the 2024 Fiscal Year.](#)

Program Contact Information

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